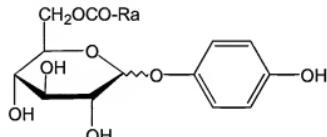


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

Formula (1)



wherein Ra is selected from the group consisting of:

R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

$\begin{array}{c} \text{CH}_3 \\ | \\ \text{R}_1\text{C}=\text{CH}_2 \end{array}$, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

R₁-COOCH=CH₂[2]], wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

R₁-COOH, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;
R₁-COO-R₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;
and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group; and

R₁-[R₃-CH=CH-R₄]X-R₅-CH₃, wherein R₁, R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;
and

R₁-CH₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

2.-10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously presented): A composition that inhibits tyrosinase comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. (Previously presented): An external preparation for the skin, comprising the composition according to claim 11.

13. (Currently amended): A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (17) or formula (19);

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



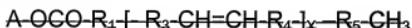
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond or an arylene group and R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (19)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. (Original): The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36. (Canceled)

37. (Previously presented) The composition according to Claim 11, further comprising a suitable carrier.